

# The Master Mummer by E. Phillips Oppenheim

(Continued from Last Week.)

(Copyright, Little, Brown & Co.)  
(All Rights Reserved.)

## CHAPTER XXVI.—Continued.

So that was the end of any hope we may have had of help from Lady Delahaye. I bowed my departure stiffly, concealing as best I could my inward rage at her mocking smile, and drove at once to Blenheim House, the temporary residence of the Archduchess and her suite. A footman passed me on to a more important person who was sitting at a round table in the hall with a visitor's book open before him. I explained to him my desire to obtain a few moments' audience with the Archduchess, but he only smiled and shook his head.

"It is quite impossible for her Highness to see anyone now before her departure, sir," he said. "If you are connected with the press, I can only tell you what I have told all the others. We have received a telegram from Ilighera with grave news concerning the health of his Majesty the King of Waldenburg, and notwithstanding the indisposition of the Princess Adelaide, the Archduchess has arranged to leave for Ilighera at once. A fuller explanation will appear in the Court Circular, and the Archduchess is particularly anxious to express her great regret to all those whom the cancellation of her engagements may inconvenience. Good-day, sir!"

The man recommenced his task, which was apparently the copying out of a list of names from the visitor's book, and signed to the footman with his penholder to show me out. But I stood my ground.

"You are leaving to-day, then?" I said.

"We are leaving to-day," the man assented, without glancing up from his task. "We are naturally very busy."

"Can't I see the Baron von Leiblingen?" I asked.

"It is quite impossible, sir," the man answered shortly. "He is engaged with her Highness."

"I will wait!" I declared.

"Then I must trouble you, sir, to wait outside," he said, with a little gesture of impatience. "I do not wish to seem uncivil, but my orders to-day are peremptory."

At that moment a door opened and a man came across the hall, slowly drawing on his gloves. I looked up and saw the Baron von Leiblingen. He recognized me at once, and bowed courteously. At the same time there was something in his manner which gave me the impression that he was not altogether pleased to see me.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Groatson?" he asked, pausing for a moment by my side.

"I am anxious to obtain five minutes' interview with the Archduchess," I answered. "If you could manage that for me I should be exceedingly obliged."

He shook his head.

"It is quite impossible!" he said decisively. "You have heard of the serious news from Ilighera, without doubt. We shall be on our way there in a few hours."

I drew him a little on one side.

"Is Isobel here, Baron?" I asked bluntly.

"I beg your pardon—is who here?" he inquired, with the air of one who is puzzled by an incomprehensible question.

"Isobel—the Princess Isobel, if you like—has been lured from our care by a forged message. We know her history now, and we are able to understand the nature of the interest which your mistress has shown in her. Therefore, when I find her missing I come to you. I want to know if she is in this house."

"If she were," the Baron remarked, "I, and everyone else who knows anything about it, would say at once that she was in her proper place. If she were, I should most earnestly advise the Archduchess to keep her here. But I regret to say that she is not. To tell you the truth, the Archduchess is so annoyed at the young lady's refusal to accept her protection, that she has lost all interest in her. I doubt whether she would receive her now if she came."

"Perhaps," I remarked slowly, "she has gone to Ilighera."

"It is, of course," the Baron agreed, "not an impossibility."

"If I do not succeed in my search," I said, "it is to Ilighera that I shall come."

"You will find it," the Baron assured me, with a smile, "a most charming place. I shall be delighted to renew our acquaintance there."

"His Majesty," I continued, "is, I have heard, very accessible. I shall be able to tell him Isobel's

story. You may keep the child away from him, Baron, but you cannot prevent his learning the fact of her existence and her history."

"My young friend," the Baron answered, edging his way toward the door, "your enigmas at another time would be most interesting. But at present I have affairs on hand, and I am pressed for time. I will permit myself to say, however, that you are altogether deceiving yourself. It was the one wish of the Archduchess to have taken Isobel to her grandfather and begged him to recognize her."

"You decline to meet me fairly, then—to tell me the truth? Mind, I firmly believe that Isobel is now under your control. I shall not rest until I have discovered her."

"Then you may discover, my young friend," the Baron said, putting on his hat, and turning resolutely away, "the true meaning of the word weariness. You are a fool to ask me any questions at all. We are on opposite sides. If I knew where the child was you are the last person I should I should tell. Her place is anywhere—save with you!"

He bowed and turned away, whispering as he passed to a footman who at once approached me. I allowed myself to be shown out. As a matter of fact, I had no alternative. But on the steps was an English servant in the Blenheim livery. I slipped half a sovereign into his hand.

"Can you tell me what time the Archduchess leaves, and from what station?" I asked.

"I am not quite sure about the time, sir," the man answered, "but the buses are ordered from Charing Cross, and they are to be here at eight to-night."

It was already past seven. I lit a cigarette and strolled on toward the station.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

AT Charing Cross station a strange thing happened. The Continental train arrived whilst I was sauntering about the platform, and out of it, within a few feet of me, stepped Feurges. He was pale and haggard, and he leaned heavily upon the arm of his servant as he stepped out of his carriage. When he saw me, however, he held out his hand and smiled.

"You expected me, then?" he exclaimed.

"Not I," I answered. "You have taken my breath away."

"I had your telegram at Brussels," he explained. "I wired St. Petersburg at once, and turned back. Any news?"

"None," I answered.

"What are you doing here?" I told him in a few rapid words. He listened intently, nodding his head every now and then.

"The Archduchess has her," he

said, "and if only one of us had the ghost of a legal claim upon the child our difficulties would end. She is an unscrupulous woman, but there are things which even she dare not do. What are they doing over there?"

He pointed to the next platform.

I took him by the arm and dragged him along.

"It is the special!" I exclaimed.

"We must see them start."

Red drusket was being stretched across the platform, and to my dismay the barricades were rolled across. The luggage was already in the van, and the guard was looking at his watch. Then a small brougham drove rapidly up and stopped opposite to the saloon. Baron von Leiblingen descended, and was immediately followed by

the Archduchess. Together they helped from the carriage and across the platform a dark, tall girl, at the first sight of whom my heart began to beat wildly. Then I remembered the likeness between the cousins and what I had heard of the Princess Adelaide's indisposition. She was almost carried into the saloon, and at the last moment she looked swiftly, almost fearfully, around her. I could scarcely contain myself. The likeness was marvellous! As the train steamed out of the station Feurges pushed aside the barricade and walked straight up to the station master.

"I want a special," he said, "to

want to get on, sir," the station master remarked. "An ordinary train will leave here in two hours, which will catch the next boat." "The special in twenty minutes," Feurges answered sharply. "Forty pounds, is it not? It is here!" The station master hurried away.

"I Bowed My Departure Stiffly, Concealing As Best I Could My Inward Rage at Her Mocking Smile."



catch the boat. I am Feurges, and I am due at St. Petersburg Wednesday."

The station master shook his head.

"You can have a special, sir, in twenty minutes, but you cannot catch that boat. The one I have just sent off would never do it, but the boat has a Royal command to wait for her."

"Can't you give me an engine

which will make up the twenty minutes?" Feurges asked.

"It is impossible, sir," the station master answered. "We have not an engine built which would come within ten miles an hour of that one."

"Very good," Feurges said. "I will have the special, at any rate. Be so good as to give your orders at once."

"You will gain nothing if you

I scarcely understood Feurges's haste to reach Dover. When I told him so he only laughed and led me away toward the refreshment room. He ordered luncheon baskets to be sent out to the train, and he made me drink a brandy and soda. Then he took me by the arm.

"You are not much of a conspirator, my friend, Arnold Groatson," he said. "You have been within a dozen yards of Isobel within the last few minutes, and you have not recognized her."

I stopped short. That wonderful likeness flashed once more back upon my mind. Certainly in the Mordaunt Rooms it had not been so noticeable. And her eyes! I looked at Feurges, and he nodded.

"The Princess Adelaide either remains in England or has gone on quietly ahead," he said. "They have dressed Isobel in her clothes, and the general public could never tell

the difference. You see how difficult they made it for us to approach her. They will be hedged around like this all across the Continent. Oh, it was a very clever move!"

I scarcely answered him. My eyes were fixed upon the tangled wilderness of red and green lights, amongst which that train had disappeared. What had they done to her, these people, that she should scarcely have been able to crawl across the platform? What had they done to make her accept their bidding, and leave England without a word or message to any of us? It had not been of her own choice. I was sure enough of that.

"Come!" Feurges said quietly.

I followed him to the platform, where the saloon carriage and engine were already drawn up. Feurges brought with him his servant and all his luggage. A few curious porters and bystanders saw us start. No one, however, manifested any particular interest in us. There was no one whose business it seemed to be to watch us.

I sat back in my corner and looked out into the darkness. Feurges, opposite to me, was leaning back with half-closed eyes. From his soft, regular breathing it seemed almost as though he slept. For me there was no thought of rest or

stay in Paris, we should be in a different position altogether. The chief of the police is my friend. I am known there, and can command as good service as the Archduchess herself. We must hope that it will be Paris. If so, we shall arrive—let me see, six hours behind them; but supposing they do break their connection, we shall have still five hours in Paris with them before they can get on. If they are cautious they will go to Ilighera via Brussels and their own country. If, however, they do not seriously regard the matter of pursuit they will go direct."

A few moments later we came to a standstill in the town station. Feurges let down the window, and talked for a few minutes with the station master. Then he resumed his seat.

"We will go on to the quay," he said. "It is almost certain that our friends left by the Paris boat. We shall have four hours to wait, but we can secure our cabins, and perhaps sleep."

We moved slowly on to the quay. A few enquiries there completely assured us. Midway across the Channel, plainly visible still, was a disappearing green light.

"That's the Marie Louise, sir," a seaman told me. "Left here five and twenty minutes ago. The ladies you were enquiring about boarded her right enough. The young lady had almost to be carried. She's the new turbine boat, and she ought to be across in about half an hour from now."

Monsieur Feurges engaged the best cabin on the steamer, and his servant fitted me up a dressing case with necessities for the journey from his master's ample store. Then he went into the saloon, and had some supper. Afterward we stood upon deck watching the passengers come on board from the train which had just arrived. Suddenly I seized Feurges by the arm and dragged him inside the cabin.

"The Princess Adelaide!" I exclaimed. "Look!"

We saw her distinctly from the window. She was dressed very plainly, and wore a heavy veil, which she had just raised. She stood within a few feet of us, talking to the maid, who seemed to be her sole companion.

"Find my cabin, Mason," she ordered. "I shall lie down directly we start. I am always ill upon these wretched night boats. It is a most unpleasant arrangement, this."

Feurges looked at me and smiled.

"Isobel's features," he remarked, "but not her voice. You see, we are on the right track. We must contrive to keep out of that young lady's way."

To keep out of the way of the Princess Adelaide was easy enough, presuming that she kept her word and remained in her cabin. I watched her enter it and close the door. Afterwards I wrapped myself in an ulster of Feurges's and went out on deck. It was a fine night, but windy, and a little dark. I lit a pipe and leaned over the side. I had scarcely been there two minutes when I heard a light footstep coming along the deck and pause a few feet away. A girl's voice addressed me.

"Can you tell me what that light is?"

I knew who it was at once. It was the most hideous ill-fortune. I answered gruffly, and without turning my head.

"Folkestone Harbour!"

I thought that after that she must surely go away. But she did nothing of the sort. She came and leaned over the rail by my side.

"You are Mr. Arnold Groatson, are you not?"

My heart sank, and I could have cursed my folly for leaving my cabin. However, since I was discovered there was nothing to do but to make the best of it.

"Yes, I am Arnold Groatson," I admitted.

"I wonder if you know who I am?" she asked.

"You are the Princess Adelaide of —"

She held up her hand.

"Stop, please! I see that you know. For some mysterious reason I am traveling almost alone, and under another name which I do not like at all. You are very fond of my cousin, Isobel, are you not, Mr. Groatson?"

I tried to see her face, but it was half turned away from me. Her voice, however, reminded me a little of Isobel's.

"Yes," I admitted slowly. "You see, she was under our care for

(Continued on Next Page.)